

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MUSCAT 00233 120943Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----120945Z 021515 /22

P R 120835Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2931
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T MUSCAT 0233

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 :GDS
TAGS: MORG PF KE IR BA MU SA MP
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST FORCE: THE NEW FORMAT

REF: STATE 030235

1. FOLLOWING IS OUR INTIAL ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY OMANGOV REACTION
TO PROPOSED EXTENDED VISITS OF MIDEASTFOR FLAGSHIP TO MUSCAT.
WE MAY HAVE FURTNSR COMMENTS FOLLOWING AMB WOLLE'S RETURN TO
POST IN ABOUT ONE WEEK'S TIME.

2. WE BELIEVE OMANGOV WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO
SUCH VISITS AND INDEED, AT HIGHEST GOVERNMENT LEVELS, WOULD
WELCOME THEM AS MANIFESTATION OF US INTEREST IN SULTANATE
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OF OMAN. ANY SENSITIVITY OMANI LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE REGARDING
US "BASE" WOULD SEEM TO BE AMPLY COVERED, SINCE NO PERMANENT
INSTALLATION OR PERSONNEL ARE TO BE ASSIGNED.

3. FROM US VIEWPOINT, APART FROM OMANI SENSITIVITIES, FACT
THAT CLEARLY NO "BASE" IS INVOLVED STRIKES US AS IMPORTANT
PLUS. IT IS IN INTERESTS OF BOTH OMAN AND USG THAT POLITICAL

PRESSURE ON SULTANATE FROM RADICAL REGIMES BE MINIMIZED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. WHILE WE EXPECT PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF VISITS WOULD DRAW PROPAGANDA FLAK FROM PDRY, IRAQIS SOVIETS, ETC., THIS SHOULD BE MANAGEABLE AS LONG AS NO PERMANENT US FACILITY FIGURES IN PLAN. SINCE OMAN WOULD BE JUST ONE OF SEVERAL AREA STATES AGREEING TO VISITS, OMANGOV COULD DRAW ON REGIONAL SUPPORT TO ANSWER CRITICS. THE REGIONAL CHARACTER OF THE PLAN IS THUS A MAJOR ADVANTAGE.

4. THE OMANIS WOULD PROBABLY EXPECT A QUID PRO QUO IN THE FORM OF ECONOMIC ANB/OR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. IN THIS, THEIR ATTITUDE WOULD BE SIMILAR TO THAT SHOWN IN THE IMPENDING MASIRAH NEGOTIATIONS. THE OMANI LEADERSHIP WOULD ALMOST INEVITABLY LINK THE TWO SUBJECTS AS SHOWING A POLICY OF RENEWED USG INTEREST IN OMAN. INDEED, THE TWO ISSUES ARE RELATED AND MIGHT USEFULLY BE MERGED INTO A SINGLE NEGOTIATION.

5. IF THESE PORT VISITS OCCUR, WE TENTATIVELY SUGGEST THAT ONE OF THE TWO VISITS PER YEAR BE COMBINED WITH A CEREMONIAL VISIT BY FLAGSHIP. THE SHIP COULD ADD THE REQUIRED TWO WEEKS ALONGSIDE PIER TO THE END OF THE THREE-DAY OR FOUR-DAZ VISIT. THE OTHER FLAGSHIP VISIT EACH YEAR COULD BE HANDLED MORE QUIETLY--THOUGH WE SUGGEST THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO SHIFTING IT TO THE PORT OF RAYSUT NEAR SALALAH ONCE THAT HARBOR IS COMPLETED IN TWO OR THREE YEARS, COMBINING VISIT WITH CEREMONIAL CALL. THAT WOULD REDUCE VISIBILITY OF MUSCAT AS MAINTENANCE SITE. WE ALSO SUGGEST THAT NO MORE THAN ONE OTHER CEREMONIAL VISIT PER YEAR AT MUSCAT BE PLANNED FOR THE DESTROYERS.

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6 ABOVE COMMENTS ARE WITHOUT DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF LOGISTICAL/MAINTENANCE CAPABILITIES IN MUSCAT PORT. WE AND MIDEASTFOR WOULD HAVE TO ADDRESS THESE FACTORS AT SOME STAGE, AS WELL AS SECURITY OF SHIP WHILE BERTHER AT PIER. WE ASSUME SHIP WOULD HAVE TO SPEND ENTIRE TWO-WEEK SPAN IN PORT QABOOS, WNICH IS COMMERCIAL HARBOR TO WHICH MANY PERSONS HAVE ACCESS DAILY. FURTHERMORE, PORT QABOOS AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSULTED ON COMMERCIAL IMPACT OF COMMITTING A PIER FOR TWO WEEKS. THERE IS ALSO QUESTION OF MUSCAT'SUITABILITY AS LEAVE PORT FOR PERSONNEL OVER TWO-WEEK PERIOD, THOUGH THIS IS PRESUMABLY NOT INSUPERABLE PROBLEM.

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